

Special Public Meeting of Witless Bay Town Council

December 30, 2021 @ 12:00 pm

Attending remotely:

Mayor Trevor Croft
Deputy Mayor Lorna Yard
Councillor Jacob Hayden
Councillor Nancy Burke
Councillor Ralph Carey
Councillor Gerard Dunne joined at 12:01 pm
Councillor Alex Troake (Absent)

1. Mayor Trevor Croft called the meeting to order at 12:00 pm.
2. Appointment of Acting Town Clerk (For meeting)
2021-437 Councillor Nancy Burke/Councillor Ralph Carey
Move that Council appoint Barb Harrigan as acting clerk for meeting.
Carried unanimously.
3. Adoption of Agenda of December 30, 2021
2021-438 Councillor Ralph Carey/Councillor Jacob Hayden
Move that Council adopt the agenda of December 30, 2021.
Carried unanimously.
4. Motion to adopt Town of Witless Bay 2022 Budget
2021-439 Deputy Mayor Lorna Yard/Councillor Gerard Dunne
Move that Council adopt the Town of Witless Bay 2022 Budget.

Discussion: Councillor Nancy Burke reported that she was happy to see in the Town's budget that Council is supporting the BBAA. Councillor Burke noted that she was hoping that Council would give them the full \$50,000.00 that they requested since they are still unable to fundraise this year. However, she does support the decision of Council and the budget and look forward to continued collaboration with the BBAA.

Discussion: Deputy Mayor Lorna Yard reported the following:
Unfortunately, the finance Committee chair, Councilor Troake, is unable to be with us today, so I would like to give a brief, broad overview of the budget in his absence. The finance committee has worked very hard to ensure that there were no increases in residential property tax for the 2022 year. It had been our hope to actually bring the mil rate down by half a point but with the numbers for this year that was not possible.

One of the reasons for this was a decrease in property assessments which brought down the amount of tax the town can collect and as a result, we were below the threshold per resident of roughly \$790. per head that we are required to collect in order to qualify for our municipal grant and gas tax money. This metric is called Own Source Revenue. We can only fulfil our own source revenue obligations through taxes – we cannot use as other source of income.

However, that decrease in assessments also means many residents should see a slight decrease in their tax bill, and we are committed to working even harder in 2022, with a full year to work on our budget rather than two months, to find way to try and bring the residential tax rate down half a mil.

We did re-adjust some of the business tax categories and mil rates. Business tax has been stable in the town for the past numbers of years while residential rates were rising, so we felt it fair and equitable to re-examine our business tax structure. We are committed to attracting new business and keeping our business taxation rates competitive with other municipalities and we have done that in this budget. That being said, in the general business category the mil rate went from 12 to 12.5, a modest increase and still below our neighbors for example where their General Business mil rate is 14.5

We investigated ways we can offer a discount to seniors, those on income support, and low-income families. We spoke with other municipalities about how they offer these discounts and while we feel a discount system based on income is the way to go, it was too late for us to do it for this year. Our accountant advised us we would need to provide residents applications early in 2022 and once we know how many people will apply for an income-based tax discount, we can then budget for it next year. We were advised we can't offer such a program until we have a sense of what it will cost us – so we plan to move forward with this in January and have it ready for the 2023 year.

Until then the 8% discount for paying taxes by the March 31, 2022 deadline will remain in place for 2022.

We also continue to support recreation, community groups, heritage groups, regional interests such as the Arena and BBAA, as the Witless Bay Fire Department. We are aiming to complete some major capital works programs in 2022 as well as begin work on the new Fire Hall, provided we are successful in securing funding for these projects,

We will be posting a more detailed budget summary on our website and Facebook page over the next few days so residents and businesses can find out more about the Town of Witless Bay 2022 budget, as well, when the threat of Covid 19 dies down we hope to organize a town hall meeting where residents can present ideas and ask questions about the future of Witless Bay and what initiatives they would like to see, and where they would like to see their tax dollars go.

In closing I'd like to recognize councilors Troake and Carey, as well as office staff Barbara Harrigan and Cassie O'Rielly, and the town accountant Roger Coombs for the collaborative effort in compiling the Town of Witless Bay Budget 2022. Carried unanimously.

5. Motion to adopt Town of Witless Bay 2022 Tax Structure

2021-440 Deputy Mayor Lorna Yard/Councillor Gerard Dunne
Move that Council adopt the Town of Witless Bay 2022 Tax Structure.
Carried unanimously.

6. Adjournment

2021-441 Councillor Nancy Burke/Councillor Ralph Carey
Move that the meeting adjourn at 12:05 pm.
Carried unanimously.